The Hervey Islands
ADZES
IN THE
Peabody Museum of Salem

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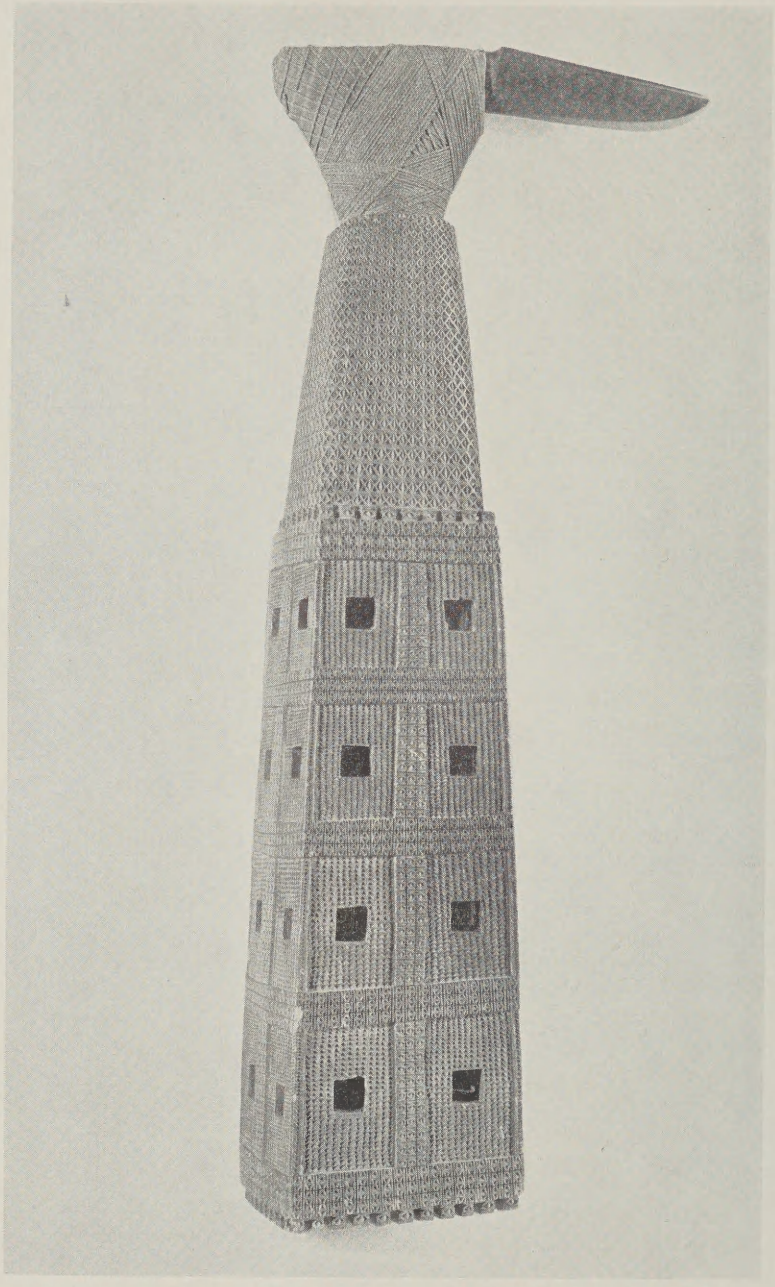

Ceremonial adz
No. 23 [E 18,781]

The Hervey Islands Adzes

IN THE

Peabody Museum of Salem

BY

ERNEST STANLEY DODGE

Assistant Curator of Ethnology

Salem

PEABODY MUSEUM

1937

PEABODY MUSEUM OF SALEM

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FOREWORD

HERVEY ISLANDS ADZES in the Peabody Museum of Salem, *by Ernest Stanley Dodge, is the second in a series of catalogues of the Museum's collection of Polynesian ethnological material.* The Hawaiian Portion of the Polynesian Collections in the Peabody Museum of Salem, *published in connection with a special exhibition in* 1920, *described all the objects from the Hawaiian Islands then owned by the Museum, and it was planned at that time to exhibit and publish in the near future the collections from other groups of islands in the Pacific. Limited gallery space and overcrowded storage prevented the assembling of large exhibits and delayed the preparation of further catalogues, but it is now hoped to continue this series with greater frequency. In the present publication a single type of object, the adzes from Mangaia, are described and illustrated.*

The Polynesian collections of the Peabody Museum are of particular interest because they include many objects brought to Salem by members of the East India Marine Society in the first half of the nineteenth century, before the cultures of the Pacific islands had been seriously affected by outside influences. This Society, founded in 1799, *was composed of persons who had actually navigated the seas near the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn as master or supercargo of a Salem vessel, and one of the three stated objects of the institution was "to form a Museum of natural and artificial curiosities, particularly such as are to be found beyond the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn." The members aided in this good work to such an extent that a printed catalogue of the Museum, containing* 2269 *entries was published in* 1821, *and by* 1831, *when a second catalogue was issued, the number of objects in the collections had risen to* 4299.

Foreword

In the case of the Hervey Islands adzes, five were given to the East India Marine Museum before 1840, *and two others, although their exact source is not known, were here before* 1867, *when the collections and building of the East India Marine Society were taken over by the Peabody Academy of Science, now known as the Peabody Museum of Salem. In addition a number of the examples which have been acquired in recent years are known to have been brought back to this country in the first half of the nineteenth century.*

The thanks of the Museum are especially due to Stephen Willard Phillips, Honorary Curator of Pacific Ethnology, for his continued interest in the growth of the collections, and for his material assistance in the publication of the present catalogue.

Lawrence Waters Jenkins,
Director.

The Hervey Islands Adzes

THE Peabody Museum's collection of adzes from the Hervey Islands consists of thirty-two specimens, twenty-three of which are complete. There are besides five handles, three of them with dummy wooden blades; and four blades without handles. Five of these adzes were collected and given to the Museum of The East India Marine Society by 1840, and two others were given not later than 1867. It is this early authenticated date which gives interest and value to these specimens, as well as to a great many other objects in the local South Pacific collection.

The island of Mangaia, where most of these adzes appear to have been made, was discovered by Captain James Cook, 29 March 1777. It is twenty miles in circumference and rises three hundred feet above the sea. Besides the adzes the inhabitants also made very beautifully decorated paddles.

In listing the collection, the handles have been measured as precisely as is worth while for all practical purposes, but they are so uneven that it is a matter of judgment in many cases. As all but four of the blades were set in handles, the length given is only that of the protruding portion of the polished face, since it would be impractical to remove the blades from the handles. Rubbings of each handle design have also been made, and drawings showing the comparative size of each blade.

Despite the fact that the old records show that some of these adzes were collected on Aitutaki and in one case Rarotonga, they were probably all made on the island of Mangaia. It is said that many adzes of this type have been carved even down to the present time for tourists and collectors, most of them finding their way into the North American market through ports on the west coast of South America. Therefore specimens collected prior to 1915 are of greater value than those of later date, because the chances are they were not

made for sale. This does not mean that only those collected before 1915 were used by the islanders for the purposes for which they were constructed, but that these carved handles, like a great many other beautiful primitive objects, have to a certain extent been commercialized. The adz handles made in recent times can usually be identified by the uniformity and inferior quality of their carving. Also, carving done with a modern steel tool is apt to leave a thin cut beyond the point where it should stop. This is not usually found in primitive carving with the shark's tooth.

Since the carving on the early adzes was executed with shark's teeth or bits of shell, it is truly the chief wonder of these handles that such fine and intricate work could be done with such primitive and limited tools. There seem to be two general types of carving, one (Plate x) coarse and deep, the other (Plate xii) much finer and shallower. The designs are the same as those used on some of the ancient gods (Bibliography 5), and the adzes themselves were venerated as minor divinities. One of the designs, called the shark's tooth pattern (*nio mango*) (Plate xi, 21), resembles very much the teeth of these fish. The most common is called *tikitiki tangata* (Plate xi, 17, etc.) and is supposed to represent a man squatting down. C. H. Read (Bibliography 9) has worked out a very ingenious theory as to the way all of the designs which resemble a "K," an "X," an "X" with an "I" superimposed, or a simple zigzag have degenerated from two human figures squatting back to back. Concerning some of the later designs, Rev. W. Wyatt Gill (Bibliography 5), in his *Jottings from the Pacific*, remarks: "Some patterns are of recent introduction, and being mere imitations of European designs, are destitute of the significance which invariably attached itself to ancient Polynesian carving. The large square holes are known as 'eel borings' (*ai tuna*), the lateral openings are naturally enough called 'clefts' (*kavana*). To carve was the employment of sacred men."

It is manifestly impossible, because of their ponderous handles, for

any of these adzes, except the first three listed, to have served any practical purpose. There are two general theories concerning them. According to the first (Bibliography 8), the working adz, transferred to a more elaborate handle, is used in a sort of ancestor worship. The second theory (Bibliography 6) supposes that the adz with the handle is itself a great god.

The first theory is, as several persons have suggested, that the head may have been used in a working handle, and then upon the death of its owner, the adz, which was his most cherished possession, was transferred to a ceremonial handle, never to be used again for any practical purpose. Some of the well formed blades are no doubt much older than their handles and may have been hafted many times. Occasionally a blade looks as though it had been considerably worn down by use.

The second theory holds that adzes with the large heavy handles are derived from the upright drums having the head of Tane, a great god throughout many parts of the Pacific, mounted on them. In Mangaia, Tane was the drum-god and the adz-god, who presided over the erotic dance as well as the war dance. The drum was also regarded as the embodiment of Tane, who was struck when the drum was beaten and whose voice issued from the fissure in it. The drum, at first horizontal, later assumed the erect form, more appropriate to the god, and was surmounted by Tane's head. This subsequently gave place to Tane's adz, and the drum itself became merely an elaborate handle.

Now, as shown by the illustrations, there are two general types of handles. One is long, thin, and round with carving done in a large deeply cut pattern. This type looks like a slightly enlarged and decorated working handle. The other type is thick, bulky, and usually square for at least part of its length. The carving on these big handles is generally much finer and shallower and more varied than that of the other type. There also appears to be an intermediate type which

has the handle diamond shaped in cross section. The carving on these is usually coarse but not particularly deep. I think it is more likely that the intermediate type represents an elaboration of the long, thin handle than a degeneration of the bulky handle, as one can form a fairly smoothly graded series from the thin handles to the diamond-shaped, while the big bulky handles seem to stand alone. It is possible that of the two main types, the first, or long, thin, coarsely decorated elaboration of the working haft type is that into which relatives put the working adzes of men when they died, and preserved them in their houses in memory of their owners and to propitiate their spirits, while the other big, bulky type, which if very large was called *kano maia* and symbolized power and authority, may have been regarded as itself a great god and used on ceremonial and public occasions. Another explanation of the difference between the comparatively simple handle and the big type is, that the variation may be due to the social scale and wealth of the owner, the relatively unimportant people having less elaborate adz handles than those of higher rank. In an effort to account for these decorated handles, writers on the subject have maintained one or the other theory, but never, so far as I know, both simultaneously. However, in view of the two very distinct types of handles, the theories are not mutually exclusive and it is possible that there is much truth in both.

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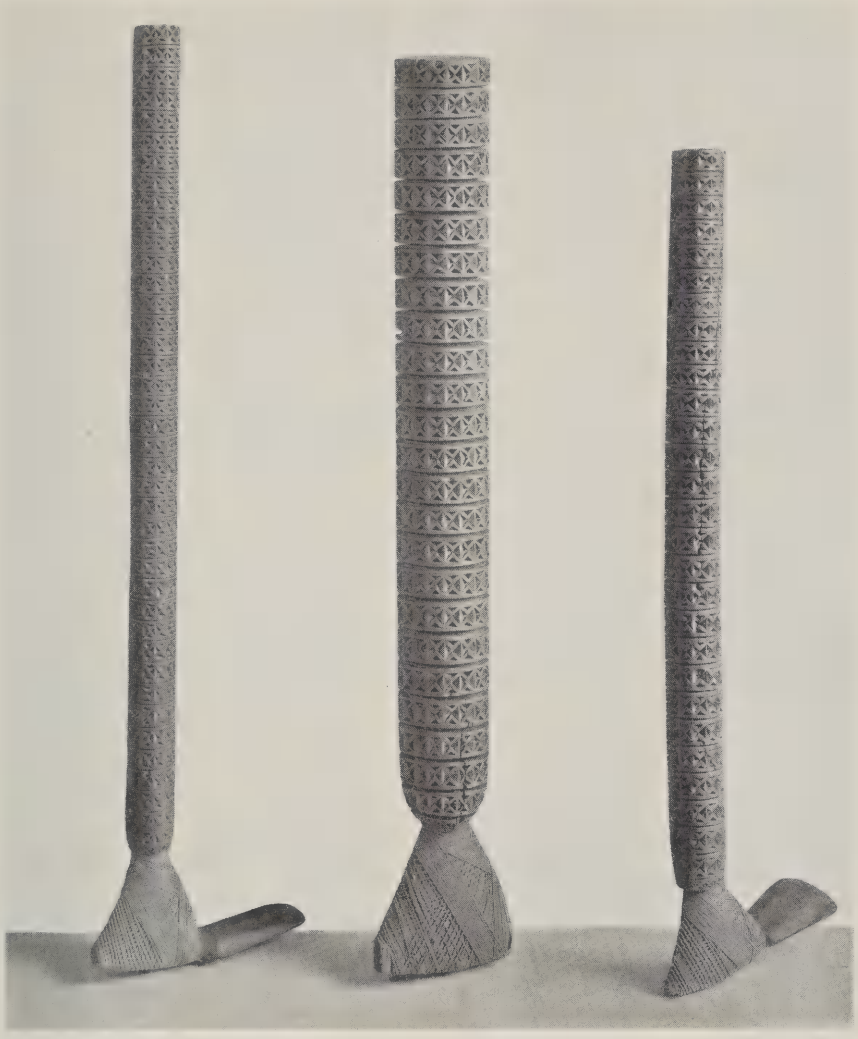


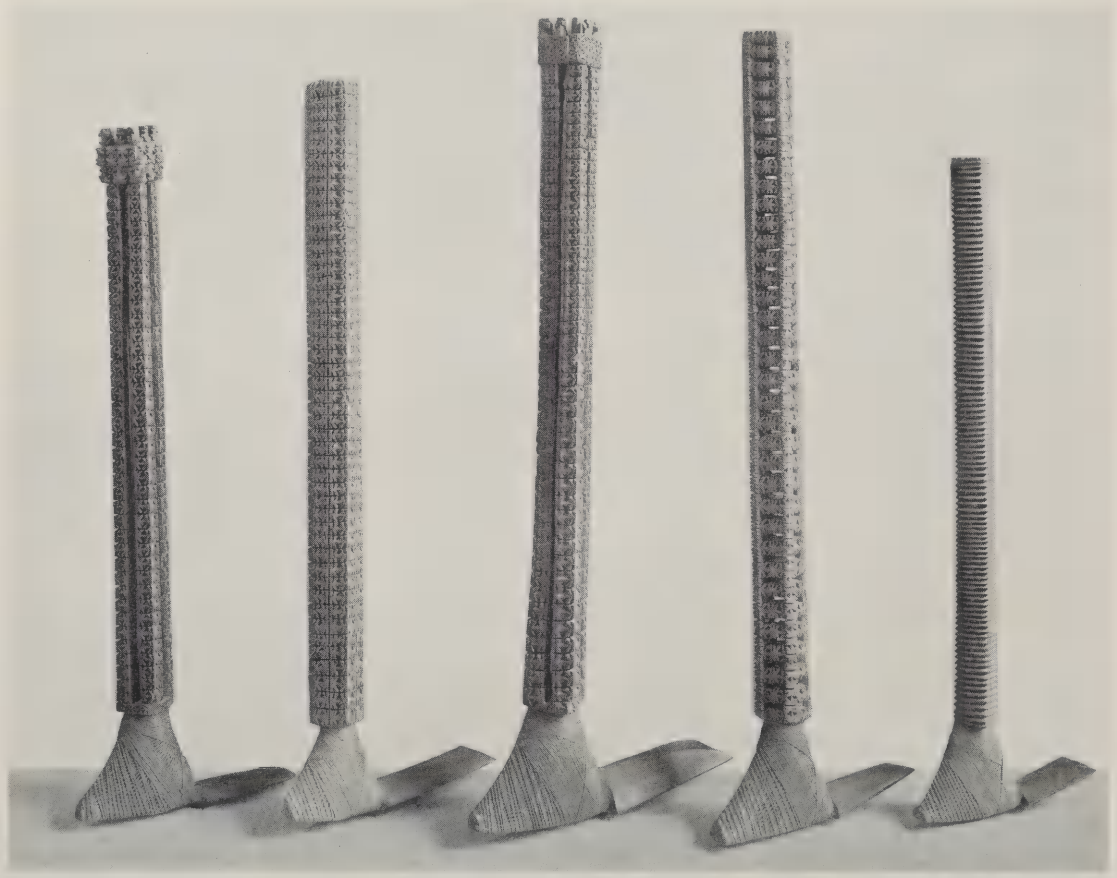
Adzes with the elaboration of the working type of handle
No. 6 [E 17,925], No. 4 [E 18,634], No. 8 [E 4525]

Adzes of the thin handled type

No. 10 [E 5114], No. 7 [E 5121], No. 5 [E 20,695], No. 9 [E 5115]

Adzes with variations from the thin handled type

No. 14 [E 15,872], No. 12 [E 14,965], No. 11 [E 18,635], No. 13 [E 15,808]

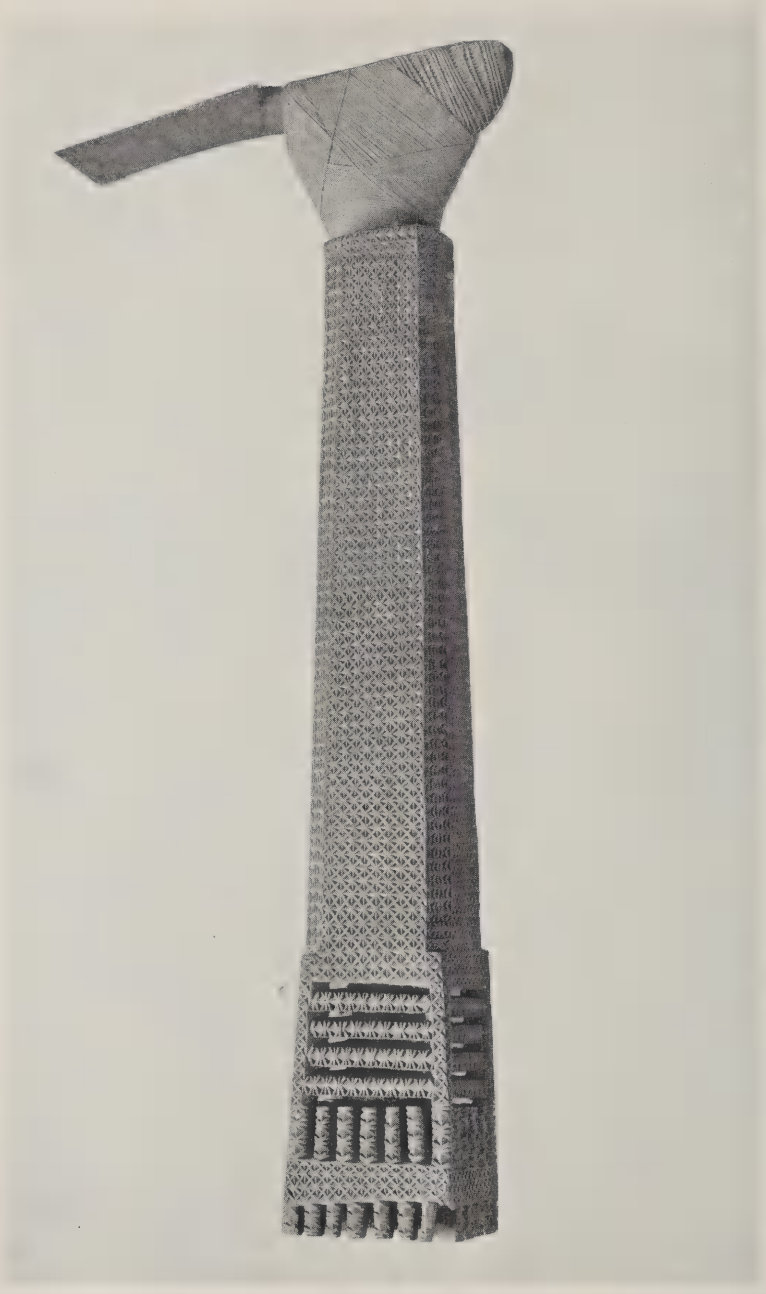


Adzes of the intermediate type

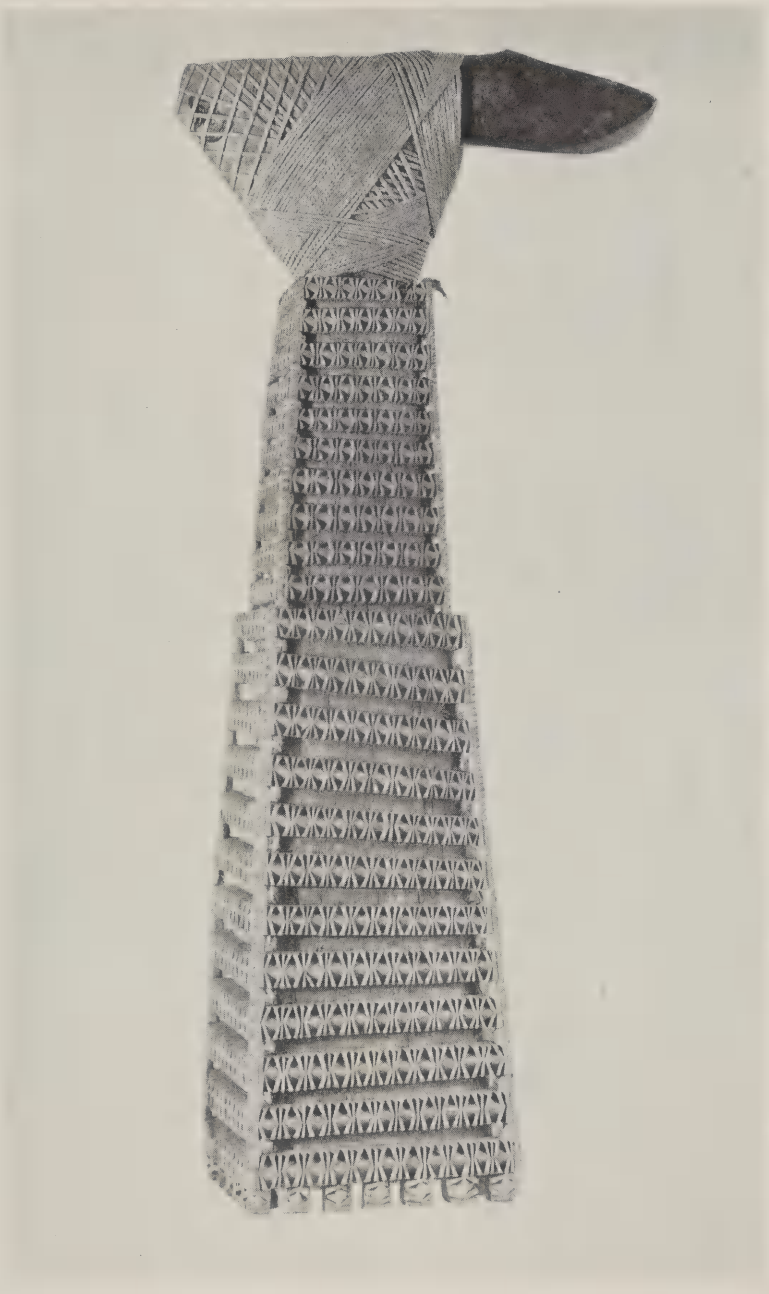
No. 16 [E 22,416], No. 18 [E 5113], No. 17 [E 4852], No. 19 [E 20,753], No. 15 [E 5120]

Adzes of the bulky handled type

No. 24 [E 22,439], No. 21 [E 19,212], No. 22 [E 8468], No. 26 [E 5117], No. 27 [E 5118], No. 28 [E 5116]



The largest adz in the collection
No. 25 [E 22,453]



Adz of the bulky type
No. 20 [E 15,013]

Adzes with functional handles

No. 2 [E 22,452], No. 1 [E 15,807], No. 3 [E 5119]

Comparative sizes of the blades in the collection
reduced to approximately one-sixth in size

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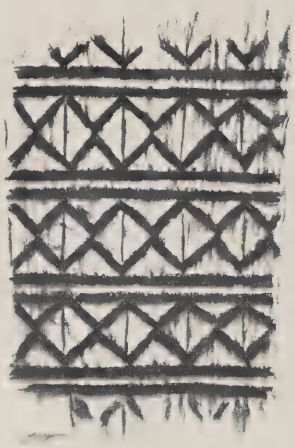

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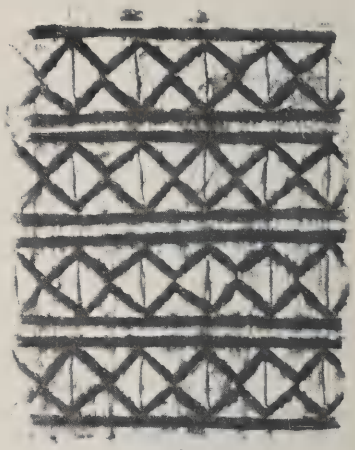

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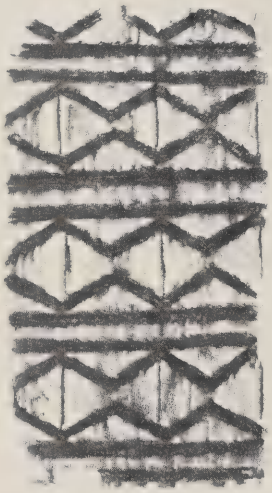

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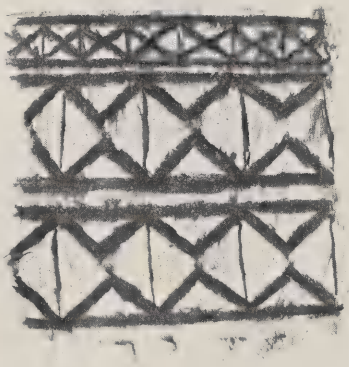

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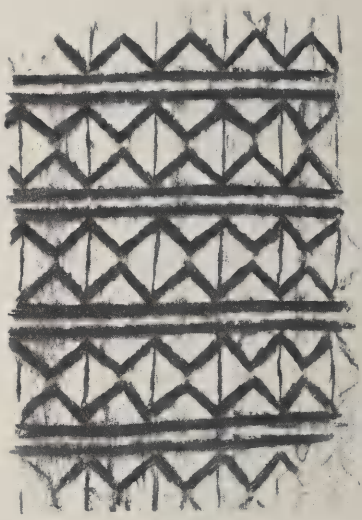

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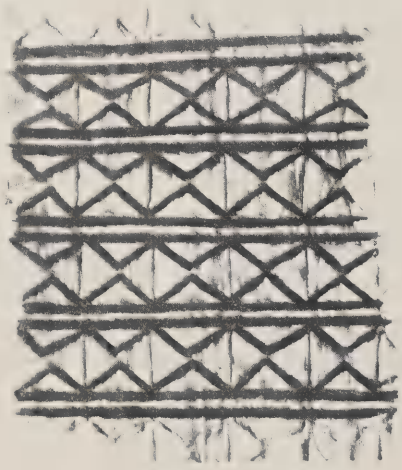

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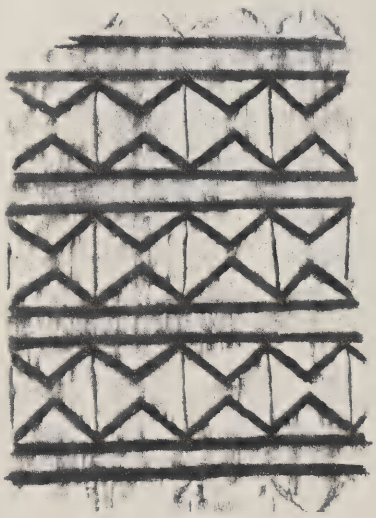

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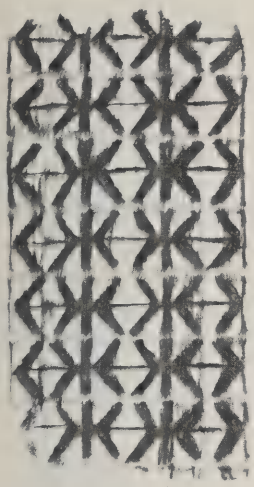
Rubbings of designs, reduced to approximately two-thirds in size



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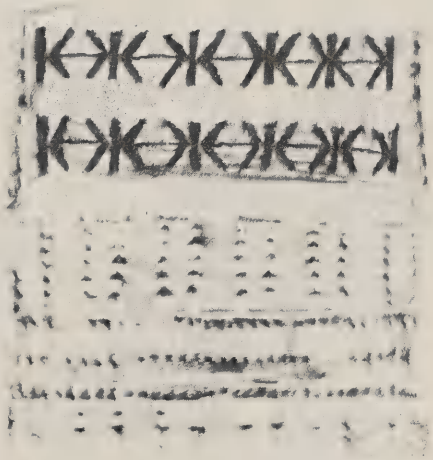

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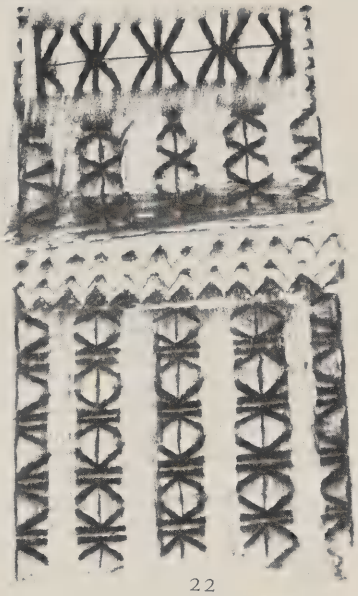

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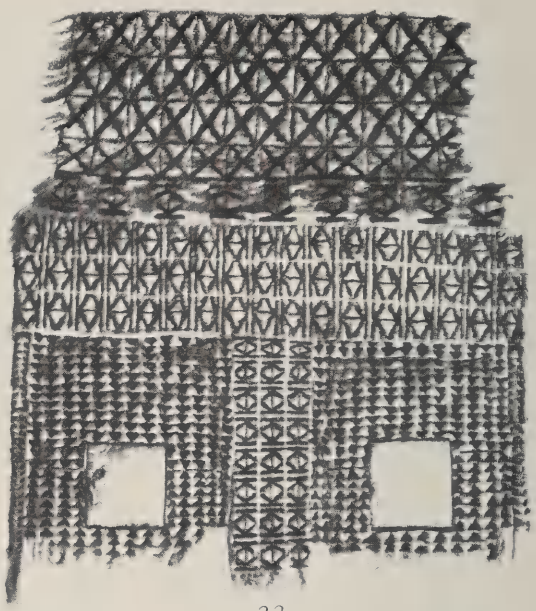

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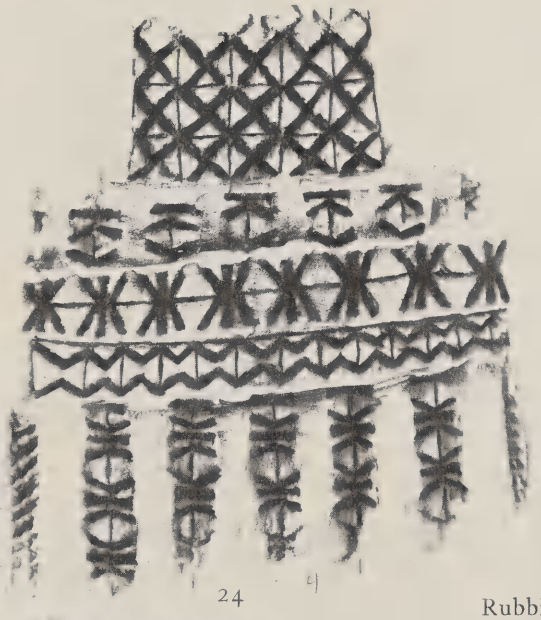

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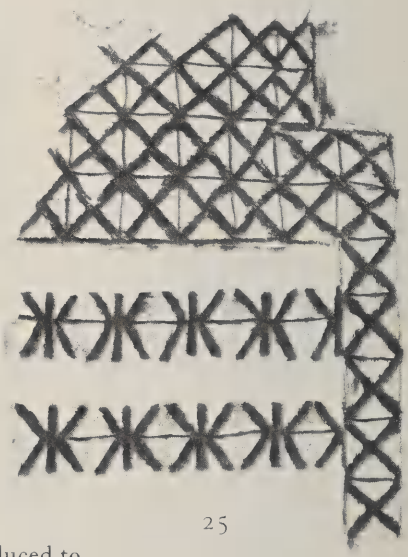

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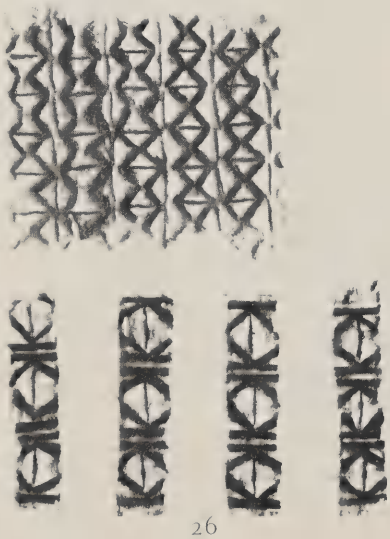

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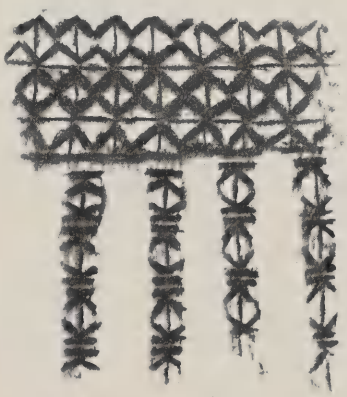

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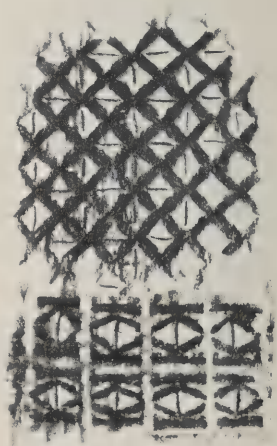

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CATALOGUE

Catalogue

1. Functional adz. [E 15,807.] Purchase, 1914. [PLATE VIII.]

HANDLE. Smooth, undecorated, tapering and ending in a slight flare. Nearly round with a slight peaked medial ridge running the entire length of the top. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 61 cm.

BLADE. Length 12.3 cm. Width at top 6 cm. Width at cutting edge 7.2 cm. Greatest thickness 3.7 cm.

2. Adz probably functional. [E 22,452.] Purchase, 1937. [PLATE VIII.]

HANDLE. Smooth, round, tapering with a slight flare, and wound its entire length with sennit. The winding, in being carried around the handle, is crossed four times making a series of four links which run in parallel series the entire length. Binding and sennit around the handle is three and four strand. Length overall 64 cm.

BLADE. Length 14.5 cm. Width at top 7 cm. Width at cutting edge 9.2 cm. Greatest thickness 2.8 cm.

3. Adz probably functional, labeled Aitutaki Island. [E 5119.] Gift of Captain Charles Millett, 1832. [PLATE VIII.]

HANDLE. Smooth, tapering with a slight flare, and wound its entire length with sennit; nearly round but with a peaked medial ridge running its entire length. Binding is of four strand sennit while that wound about the handle is mostly three and only rarely four strand. The pattern of the winding is quite dissimilar to the preceding specimen, starting with two braids which cross twice in each turn about the haft. Length overall 66 cm.

BLADE. Length 13 cm. Width at top 6 cm. Width at cutting edge 7.7 cm. Greatest thickness 3.2 cm.

4. Large ceremonial adz. [E 18,634.] Gift of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, 1923. Collected before 1880. [PLATE I.]

HANDLE. Straight, carved and more than 10 cm. in diameter. Nearly round but has a slight medial ridge running along the under side of the handle instead of the top as in previous cases. The carving is coarse and deeply incised. Length overall 94 cm.

Blade missing.

Peabody Museum

5. Ceremonial adz. [E 20,695.] Purchase, 1930. [PLATE II.]

   HANDLE. Slightly tapering with a small amount of flare at the end. The carving is of medium depth and a medial ridge runs the length of the top. Length overall 83 cm.

   BLADE. Length 16.5 cm. Width at top 8 cm. Width at cutting edge 12 cm. Greatest thickness 3.2 cm.

6. Ceremonial adz. [E 17,925.] Gift of Charles Edwin Flint, 1921. [PLATE I.]

   HANDLE. Straight without taper or flare, there is no medial ridge and the carving is of medium depth. Length overall 97.8 cm.

   BLADE. Length 11.5 cm. Width at top 6.2 cm. Width at cutting edge 7.2 cm. Greatest thickness 2.8 cm.

7. Ceremonial adz, labeled Aitutaki. [E 5121.] Gift of Jonathan Peele Saunders, 1840. [PLATE II.]

   HANDLE. Straight and slightly flaring towards the end with no medial ridge. Carving deeply incised. Binding of two and three strand sennit. Length 93 cm.

   BLADE. Length 10 cm. Width at top 3.2 cm. Width at cutting edge 5.2 cm. Greatest thickness 2.2 cm.

8. Ceremonial adz. In pencil on the back of the label is written "Aitutaki." [E4525.] Gift of H. W. Chaplin, 10 June 1902 through Frank Weston Benson. Collected by Captain Mathias Amas, circa 1850. [PLATE I.]

   HANDLE. Straight with medial ridge along top. Carving deeply incised. Length 86.7 cm. Binding of three strand sennit.

   BLADE. Length 9.4 cm. Width at top 6 cm. Width at cutting edge 9.5 cm. Greatest thickness 2.3 cm.

9. Ceremonial adz. [E 5115.] Source and exact date of accession unknown: in the Museum of the East India Marine Society prior to 1867. [PLATE II.]

   HANDLE. Straight with medium deep carving and medial ridges running the entire length along both the top and bottom. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 67 cm.

   BLADE. Length 13.6 cm. Width at top 4.2 cm. Width at cutting edge 4 cm. Greatest thickness 5 cm.

Catalogue

10. Ceremonial adz. [E 5114.] Gift of William Upton, 1835. [PLATE II.]

HANDLE. Slightly tapering with a flare at the end. Carving medium, deeply incised. Medial ridges both top and bottom running the entire length. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 75.5 cm.

BLADE. Length 20.4 cm. Width at top 6.3 cm. Width at cutting edge 5.5 cm. Greatest thickness 4.4 cm.

11. Ceremonial adz. [E 18,635.] Gift of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, 1923. Collected before 1880. [PLATE III.]

HANDLE. Straight and round with medial ridge along the top. Square castellated end. Carving quite deeply incised. Binding three strand sennit. Length overall 81.7 cm.

BLADE. Length 13.4 cm. Width at top 5.6 cm. Width at cutting edge 5.6 cm. Greatest thickness 3.6 cm.

12. Ceremonial adz. [E 14,965.] Gift of William Crowninshield Endicott, 1911. [PLATE III.]

HANDLE. Straight with no medial ridge. Carving very deeply incised. Small carving on the butt of the handle. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 80 cm.

BLADE. Length 17.3 cm. Width at top 5 cm. Width at cutting edge 3.9 cm. Greatest thickness 3.7 cm.

13. Ceremonial adz. [E 15,808.] Purchase, 1914. [PLATE III.]

HANDLE. Straight, octagonal, with carving medium deeply incised. Small dots on the butt. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 67 cm.

BLADE. Length 12 cm. Width at top 5.6 cm. Width at cutting edge 9 cm. Greatest thickness 2.7 cm.

14. Ceremonial adz. [E 15,872.] Gift of Mrs. Charles F. Curwen, through the Essex Institute, 1914. [PLATE III.]

HANDLE. Straight, octagonal, with carving deeply incised. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 77 cm.

BLADE. Length 13 cm. Width at top 4.8 cm. Width at cutting edge 4 cm. Greatest thickness 4.3 cm.

15. Ceremonial adz, labeled Aitutaki Island. [E 5120.] Gift of Jonathan Peele Saunders, 1840. [PLATE IV.]

HANDLE. Straight, diamond shaped. The decoration is entirely different from any of the other specimens being a series of parallel V-shaped grooves around the handle and covering its entire length. Binding of two and three strand sennit. Length overall 78.9 cm.

BLADE. Length 10 cm. Width at top 5.5 cm. Width at cutting edge 6.7 cm. Greatest thickness 2.5 cm.

16. Ceremonial adz. [E 22,416.] Gift of Stephen Willard Phillips, 1936. [PLATE IV.]

HANDLE. Straight, diamond shaped, with a castellated decoration on the end. Perforated nearly the entire length along both diameters dividing the handle into four sections. Carving, medium deep. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 82 cm.

BLADE. Length 12 cm. Width at top 5.5 cm. Width at cutting edge 5 cm. Greatest thickness 2.5 cm.

17. Ceremonial adz. [E 4852.] Gift of Frank Weston Benson, 1903. [PLATE IV.]

HANDLE. Straight, diamond shaped, with castellated decoration on the end. Perforated nearly the entire length along both diameters dividing the handle into four sections. Carving medium deep. Binding of two, three and four strand sennit. Length overall 96 cm.

BLADE. Length 17.9 cm. Width at top 7.4 cm. Width at cutting edge 7.5 cm. Greatest thickness 5.4 cm.

18. Ceremonial adz, labeled Aitutaki Island. [E 5113.] Gift of Jonathan Peele Saunders, 1840. [PLATE IV.]

HANDLE. Straight, diamond shaped, with a flat strip running along both the top and bottom the entire length, making the cross section a figure of six unequal sides. Carving medium deeply incised and comparatively crude. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 88.3 cm.

BLADE. Length 16.3 cm. Width at top 6.5 cm. Width at cutting edge 7.2 cm. Greatest thickness 3.6 cm.

19. Ceremonial adz. [E 20,753.] Gift of Stephen Willard Phillips, 1930. [PLATE IV.]

HANDLE. Straight, diamond shaped, with elevated ridges along each angle. Decoration medium deeply incised with perforations between each section. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 94.6 cm.

BLADE. Length 12.3 cm. Width at top 5 cm. Width at cutting edge 4.8 cm. Greatest thickness 3.8 cm.

20. Ceremonial adz. [E 15,013.] Gift of Stephen Willard Phillips, 1912. From the Frank Wood collection in New Bedford. [PLATE VII.]

HANDLE. Square being 4.8 cm. on a side near the head and increasing in size to approximately 9.2 cm. at the base. Carving fine. Deep cuttings between rows of decoration make perforations at the corners. Binding mostly of four strand sennit, some three. Castellated at the base. Length overall 39.7 cm.

BLADE. Length 6 cm. Width at top 3.5 cm. Width at cutting edge 4 cm. Greatest thickness 3.6 cm.

21. Ceremonial adz handle. [E 19,212.] Gift of William H. Taylor, 1924. [PLATE V.]

HANDLE. Four sided. Approximately 6.9 cm. square increasing to approximately 12 cm. near the base. Corners at base are slightly rounded. Hollow for 22.5 cm. from the base. This lower part has shark's tooth carving. Perforated corners and castellated base. The shark's tooth carving comes out very poorly in the rubbing due to its construction. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 63.5 cm.

Blade missing.

22. Ceremonial adz handle. [E 8468.] Gift of Charles Goddard Weld, 1906. [PLATE V.]

HANDLE. Four sided. Approximately 4.6 cm. square near the head increasing in size to approximately 8.6 cm. at the base. Hollow for nearly 23 cm. at the base. Carving medium, deeply incised. Above the hollow section there are deep cuts between parallel rows of decoration making perforations at the corners. There are two bands of shark's tooth carving. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 74 cm.

Blade missing, wooden dummy in its place.

23. Ceremonial adz. [E 18,781.] Gift of Stephen Willard Phillips, 1923. [FRONTISPIECE.]

HANDLE. Squared sides with rounded corners near the head. Diameter near the head about 7.5 cm. increasing in size to about 11 cm. square at the base. Carving very fine and shallow with elaborate arrangement. Hollow with eight perforated square holes on each side arranged in pairs. Castellated base. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 55.8 cm.

BLADE. Length 11.8 cm. Width at top 4.2 cm. Width at cutting edge 3.3 cm. Greatest thickness 3.4 cm. Painted on the blade is the following: "Indian hatchet—from Island of Roratonga, (Hervey Group) South Pacific Ocean. Presented by Br. R. Julius Wolff. Yerba Buena Lodge No. 15."

24. Ceremonial adz. [E 22,439.] Gift of Stephen Willard Phillips, 1936. [PLATE V.]

HANDLE. Octagonal for 21.7 cm. from the head towards the base. Diameter near head about 6.5 cm. gradually increasing in size to approximately 12.5 cm. square at the base. Square section hollow and perforated between rows of ornamentation with shark's tooth carving down the corners. Carving fairly shallow. Castellated base. Binding of three and four strand sennit. Length overall 53 cm.

BLADE. Length 7.4 cm. Width at top 3.8 cm. Width at cutting edge 3.8 cm. Greatest thickness 3 cm.

25. Ceremonial adz. [E 22,453.] Gift of Stephen Willard Phillips, 1937. [PLATE VI.]

HANDLE. Square with corners bevelled for 58 cm. of its length. About 9.2 cm. in diameter near the head increasing in size to about 13 cm. at the base. Carving moderately shallow. Five perforations on each corner in the square section towards the base. Castellated base. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 95 cm.

BLADE. Length 17.7 cm. Width at top 9 cm. Width at cutting edge 10.5 cm. Greatest thickness 3.6 cm.

26. Ceremonial adz handle. [E 5117.] Gift of George Bailey Loring before 1891. [PLATE V.]

HANDLE. Round. Approximately 5.3 cm. across diameter near head. Round section 29 cm. long. Remainder to base square, gradually increasing in size to about 7.8 cm. on a side. Square section hollow with perforations between vertical rows of decoration. Castellated base. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 73 cm.

Blade missing, wooden dummy substituted.

27. Ceremonial adz handle. [E 5118.] Gift of George Bailey Loring before 1891. [PLATE V.]

HANDLE. Round about 6.5 cm. in diameter near head. Round section about 31.2 cm. long. Remainder to base square. Entire handle gradually increasing in size to about 12 cm. square. Square section hollow and perforated between rows of carving. Incisions shallow. Castellated base. Binding of two and three strand sennit.

Blade missing, wooden dummy substituted.

28. Ceremonial adz. [E 5116.] Source and exact date of accession unknown: in the Museum of the East India Marine Society prior to 1867. [PLATE V.]

HANDLE. Round. About 4 cm. in diameter near head and increasing in size to about 10 cm. in diameter across the base. Small section of the base hollow and perforated by five square holes. Castellated base. Carving shallow. Binding of three strand sennit. Length overall 61 cm.

BLADE. Length 10 cm. Width at top 2.7 cm. Width at cutting edge 2.9 cm. Greatest thickness 2.5 cm.

29. Adz blade. [E 15,427.] Purchase, 1913.

Length 11 cm. Width at top 6.5 cm. Width at cutting edge 7 cm. Greatest thickness 5.4 cm.

30. Adz blade. [E 18,636.] Gift of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, 1923. Collected by Captain John Percival, 1843.

Length 24.5 cm. Width at top 5 cm. Width at cutting edge 4.8 cm. Greatest thickness 5.6 cm.

Peabody Museum

31. Adz blade. [E 18,637.] Gift of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, 1923. Collected before 1880.

    Length 14 cm. Width at top 3.2 cm. Width at cutting edge 3 cm. Greatest thickness 4.6 cm.

32. Adz blade. [E 18,638.] Gift of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, 1923. Collected before 1880.

    Length 16 cm. Width at top 5 cm. Width at cutting edge 6.2 cm. Greatest thickness 4.5 cm.

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